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"And what rough beast its hour come round at last . . ."—*William Butler Yeats*

THE CHIMERA

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Winter Mask: To the Memory of W. B. Yeats

By Allen Tate

I

Towards nightfall when the wind
Tries the eaves and casements
(A winter wind of the mind
Long gathering its will)
I lay the mind's contents
Bare, as upon a table,
And ask, in a time of war,
Whether there is still
To a mind frivolously dull
Anything worth living for.

II

If I am meek and dull
And a poor sacrifice
Of perverse will to cull
The act from the attempt,
Just look into damned eyes
And give the returning glare;
For the damned like it, the more
Damnation is exempt
From what would save its heir
With a thing worth living for.

III

The poisoned rat in the wall
Cuts through the wall like a knife,
Then blind, drying, and small
And driven to cold water,
Dies of the water of life:
Both damned in eternal ice,
The traitor become a boor,

Having led his friend to slaughter,
Now bites his head—not nice,
The food that he lives for.

IV

I supposed two scenes of hell,
Two human bestiaries,
Might uncommonly well
Convey the doom I thought;
But lest the horror freeze
The gentler estimation
I go to the sylvan door
Where nature has been bought
In rational proration
As a thing worth living for.

V

Should the buyer have been beware?
It is an uneven trade
For man has wet his hair
Under the winter weather
With only fog for shade:
His mouth a bracketed hole
Picked by the crows that bore
Nature to their hanged brother,
Who rattles against the bole
The thing that he lived for.

VI

I asked the master Yeats
Whose great style could not tell
Why it is man hates
His own salvation,
Prefers the way to hell,
And finds his last safety
In the self-made curse that bore
Him towards damnation:
The drowned undrowned by the sea,
The sea worth living for.

EDITORIAL NOTE

In *Partisan Review* for January-February 1943 there appeared Part I of a series of articles on "New Failure of Nerve" with contributions by John Dewey, Sidney Hook and Ernest Nagel. The thesis of the series, in brief, was that civilization is now in the midst of its worst crisis since the collapse of the Roman Empire and that this failure is due primarily to lack of faith in scientific positivism and a "flight from responsibility" into an "obscurantism" and mysticism. Interested readers are referred to the series which is continuing in current numbers of the *Partisan Review.*

Because we thought that the issue is of vital importance and that science is an inadequate answer to the problem, the editors offered the pages of *The Chimera* to four prominent men of letters to reply as they thought fit. In this number Mr. Burke and Mr. Wheelwright appear. In the Summer number W. H. Auden and Jacques Maritain will continue the discussion.

The editors will welcome comment from our readers.

"HOMER"

E. Mcknight Kauffer: Born in Great Falls, Montana, 1893. Began career in theatre as scene painter's assistant in travelling theatres at the age of fifteen. Has been stranded in Omaha, Philadelphia, Terre-Haute and Washington, D.C. Became salesman in bookshop in San Francisco. Attended night classes there.

Studied at Chicago Art Institute, Munich, Paris. Arrived in London 1914. Volunteered for British Army and later for American Army. Began career as poster designer with London Underground Railways. Became leading designer in England.

Now is a (1) Royal Designer to Industry; (2) Member of Advisory Council of Victoria and Albert Museum; (3) Visiting Professor to Royal College of Art; (4) Member of Council for Art & Industry, London Board of Trade. One-man exhibitions at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; Museum of Modern Art, New York, Buenos Aires. Rated in *Who's Who* and in *Columbia Encyclopedia.*

Dogmatism—New Style

By Philip Wheelwright

Our doughty contemporary, *The Partisan Review,* which has blitzed with serene impartiality the Communist Party and the N. A. M., now turns its attack against all those who, on one ground or another, disbelieve in the adequacy of science and scientific techniques to answer the important questions confronting mankind. The list of those who, like myself, are sceptical about such adequacy is very large and would include such diverse representatives as Gandhi, Thomas Mann, Vice-President Wallace, Reinhold Neibuhr, Father Divine, the Catholic Church, virtually all branches of Protestantism, and Adolf Hitler; or, if we look to the past, Jesus, Buddha, Plato, Shakespeare, William James, Mme. Blavatsky, and Rasputin—the possibilities are inexhaustible. Categorizing makes strange bedfellows. Sidney Hook, who opens the first symposium,* does concede the wide diversity of his opponents' views, to which "no catalogue can do justice," but regards them all as sharing a quality of intellectual panic, or, as his title and the title of the whole symposium express it, "failure of nerve." The odd thing about this sharp imputation is that Hook so frankly admits its inapplicability to the two principal objects of his attack—the great Reinhold Niebuhr, whose political courage Hook admires, and the Catholic Church, whose doctrine "testifies not to a failure of nerve but just to plain nerve —brazen and provocative." This inconsistency between early allegations and subsequent argument suggests the unwisdom of

* In the January-February number. As this is designated "Part I" I infer that more is to follow.

such irresponsible psychologizing. Cowardice is a charge easier to hurl than to validate. The charge would doubtless be relevant *if* it could be validated against all or a disproportionately large percentage of those espousing a certain way of life or set of views. But Hook's argument, far from substantiating his charge, clearly exempts from it the only two cases he examines. I should think he might better have avoided name-calling, concentrating on issues.

Ernest Nagel, not too dissimilarly, finds his opponents guilty of malice. (At least, he calls their philosophies malicious, which I assume to be metonymy rather than personification.) Again the imputation appears to be directed more by emotional or perhaps journalistic considerations than by rational ones. To reapply Nagel's own declaration (p. 55): "It is sheer dogmatism to assume that only one conception" of truth is valid; "and it is the height of discourtesy and parochialism to damn" an opponent as malicious simply because his standards of truth and validity differ from one's own. Not that the discourtesy bothers me; I am gunning for the parochialism. Or, in plain terms, the bigotry.

There are bigotries and bigotries. The bigotry of a positivist like Nagel is so different from the bigotry of an orthodox churchman that in shieing away from the one it is easy to slip unawares into the other. My criticism is not concerned with ecclesiastical bigotry; that is a different story. I am declaring against the positivistic, metascientific type of bigotry so inherent in Nagel's otherwise able exposition—the bigotry which damns any method and any conception of truth other than those involved in the public, experimental techniques of the sciences.

The crux of my disagreement with positivism and of my reason for considering it bigoted is expressed in the following passage from an earlier article of mine, which Nagel quotes omitting the phrases in parenthesis: "(To me) it is an axiom of sound method that any experience is, in some manner and to some degree, intrinsically cognitive. An experience of love (as distinguished from a passing spasm of lust or of sentimentality) is at the same time an insight into the lovable nature of what is loved; an experience of moral urgency (as distinguished from an impulsive drive) is

an insight into the rightness of the action to be performed; an experience of reverence (as distinguished from a gust of religious nostalgia) is an insight into the divinity of what is reverenced. Every such experience is a growth in wisdom, and the wisdom is not testable by scientific techniques."

Nagel's omissions are a clue to his valuations. Since his style of thinking tends to be monosemantical, breaking down any whole meaning into recognizable semantic *units*, rather than polar, dialectical (in the Socratic sense), and dramatic, he fails to perceive that the unqualified epithet "experience of reverence" may not adequately represent the meaning intended by a writer who has spoken of "experience of reverence as distinguished from a gust of religious nostalgia," and so of the rest. My point is that the insights generated by these allegiances of the whole mind—not merely states of emotion, although involving emotion and reason and outward experience too—are what constitute and have always constituted the main source of human wisdom. For wisdom, as distinguished from knowledge, involves valuing with one's whole mind; and valuations of this sort—I call them *crucial*, or again *wholistic* valuations—are, and in any case *should* be, something significantly more than rationalizations of impulse, desire, self-interest, sentiment, or whim. Our contemporary insensitivity to this difference is one of the most ominous of the evils that have befallen us.

Here, then, is the important issue. I affirm, and Nagel denies, that there are sources of valid insight, and indispensable factors in man's total wisdom, which cannot be decisively tested by scientific techniques. But Nagel's arguments never meet the issue quite squarely, so far as I can see. After quoting my view as indicated above, he does not discuss it at all, but proceeds rather to make these declarations: (1) that scientific theories are not exclusively quantitative but involve, as a necessary context, "familiar" qualitative discriminations such as color and sound; (2) that there is "no shred of evidence" that minds exist as disembodied entities; (3) that the abstractness of science is no weakness, since all knowledge must be abstract to some degree or else

it is not knowledge but merely "an unanalyzed duplication of its own subject-matter." My replies in brief are as follows:

(1a) A scientist, acting in his proper capacity as scientist, is not interested in discriminations of color and sound for their own sakes, as a painter or a musician would be, but in a secondary sense as clues to the systematized kind of knowledge which he is after. Hence he may build a technically valid science of acoustics upon a relatively defective sensitivity to total differences—witness the acoustical engineers who have arranged the dead-sounding Studio 8-H for so many of Toscanini's recordings! Yet it is plain that Toscanini *knows* more about sounds (as distinguished from the physics of sound waves) than those engineers.

(1b) In any case, sound and color are not the most important qualities of human wisdom. Spiritual qualities such as tonal beauty, nobility, and holiness cannot be either affirmed or denied of a situation on the basis of purely experimental techniques. — Aha! cries the positivist; then it follows that such qualities do not belong to the objective situation at all, but are merely verbalizations of a human reaction to the situation. That, however, is precisely the question at issue—what *is* the objective situation? The scientist accepts as a working postulate that the objective situation means whatever scientific language is able to formulate and scientific method theoretically able to test. So far, good. But Nagel and his fellow-positivists turn this useful postulate into a dogma for which they claim universal applicability. Their dogma, like so many dogmas of other types, is usually smuggled into the discussion when no one is looking, and thereafter is taken for granted with an air of injured innocence whenever an opponent ventures to challenge its indubitability.

(2) The issue is not concerned with the question whether minds exist as "disembodied" entities. My own mind is embodied, and I cannot frame any clear idea of what a disembodied existence would be like. But to say there is "no shred of evidence" that my mind *exists* (if that is what Nagel means) is either to talk nonsense—for every significant experience that I enjoy and every decisive choice that I make testify *to me* that my mind exists,—

or else it is to argue against a particular metaphysical theory regarding the mind, or else (what is here most probably the case) "no shred of evidence" is intended to mean no shred of experimental evidence. But this begs rather than meets the question at issue, which is precisely whether there are valid kinds of evidence other than the publicly experimental.

(3) Nagel's third argument—that the abstractness of science cannot be a defect, inasmuch as all cognition is abstract in some way and to some degree—is oddly fallacious. One might as well excuse Hitler on the ground that all men possess acquisitive tendencies in some way and to some degree. The way and the degree matter very much! Every act of cognition is "abstract," I concede, in a double sense. First, because it employs present data as signs of referenda distinct from or extending beyond the data themselves. Second and more important, because every cognition occurs in some particular human perspective, and is thus limited, i.e., implicitly abstracted from other possible perspectives and the cognitions they might make possible. I agree of course, and every anti-positivist with whom I am on terms of controversial intelligibility agrees, that the scientific perspective is an important one. Nagel is beating corpses when he declares that the present criticism of science "provides no valid ground for excluding the operations of experimental inquiry from the domain of human affairs." If anyone advocates such exclusion it would have been better to deal with him in a separate article; he probably does not read the *Partisan Review*. The question at issue between Nagel and those of my persuasion is not whether human affairs can receive benefit from the operations of experimental inquiry; admittedly they *can;* whether or not they *do* will depend very largely on the spirit in which the operations are carried out and the aims at which they are directed. The scientific perspective cannot be judged as good or bad except in terms of the larger human perspective which includes and should include it.

In the second part of his article Nagel does go so far as to admit "the distinction between the behavior of inorganic masses and the distinctive activities of men"; he admits, too, that the

direction of human activities cannot be deduced "from physical laws containing no mention of purposive behavior." But on the next page he goes on to declare: "Whether a quality [the purposive quality of human actions, for instance?] is to be regarded as an 'emergent' or not is relative to a specific theory, and is not an *inherent* fact about that quality"; his ground being that certain chemical reactions which could not be explained in terms of the concepts and theories of nineteenth century physics are explainable by present-day physics. Presumably, therefore, he means to suggest what he does not explicitly state: that human purposive behavior, though not at present explicable in terms of the behavior of inorganic masses, may perhaps be—or would he say *is*?—ultimately explainable in such terms.

Now I am not prepared either to affirm or deny the *ultimate* explicability of human behavior patterns in terms of the movement of inorganic masses. The word "ultimately" has a bandersnatch quality, which prevents a proposition that contains it from ever being tested. A piece of human behavior is what it is; explain it by certain material conditions, and perhaps when those conditions are repeated the behavior will be repeated, perhaps it won't; in the latter case, it becomes evident that this particular set of conditions cannot be the sufficient cause of this piece of behavior; a further and more complex analysis of the putative conditions is therefore required, and so on *ad indefinitum*.

Theoretically, any set of movements in the physical world can be given a mathematical formulation. A piece of human behavior taken together with the movements of molecules composing and surrounding it may be regarded as a super-set of physical movements, and hence this super-set (i.e., the correlation between the gross behavior and the constituent molecular movements) is susceptible of mathematical formulation—theoretically! But in practice no scientist and no mundane group of scientists could ever live long enough to calculate the equation. The increase in complexity of formulas representing even fairly simple physical syntheses has been illustrated dramatically by Bancroft H. Brown's formula for the change in volume of ice, water, and vapor. The

volume changes of ice and of vapor in relation to temperature are each represented by a simple linear equation; the volume change of water from freezing to boiling point is represented by a cubic equation. All three of these individual equations are familiar to, and easily handled by, students in a college physics course. But suppose someone asks why these three states of "the same substance" should be represented by such different and apparently unrelated equations? Is there any underlying "explanation"? The answer is: yes, *if* by explanation you mean a single formula that will incorporate the three distinct formulas applying to ice, water, and vapor, *and if* you are willing to pay any price in complexity in order to achieve that formula. Professor Brown has calculated the required super-formula and has recorded it in normal-sized writing upon a ribbon some thirty feet long. The formula has the advantage of unity; by substituting any temperature whatever for x—whether of ice, water, or vapor—the solution for $f(x)$, the volume, will be accurate. But it would take an expert calculator several weeks to work out the change in water-volume from 70 to 80 by this unified formula, whereas the problem can be solved in a couple of minutes by the partial formula that pertains to water alone. And this degree of formularistic complexity represents no more than the synthesis of three simple inorganic patterns of change!

I am not interested in an equation which, if written across interstellar space, could be traversed in a billion years by an angel moving at the speed of light—and presumably solved only in a much longer time. Such an equation might possibly, for aught I know, represent the relation between a particular human behavior pattern and the molecular movements constituting it. But the angel-mathematician might discover that the very next behavior pattern would require a quite different equation—as distinct from the first, in proportion to their common complexity, as the formula for the expansion of water is distinct from that for ice. And what an unimaginably greater complexity would then be required to formularize the older set of events in their relation to the new! Even if we set no limits to the angel's patience and

computing ability, I suggest that no total synthesis, no super-super-formula comprehending all behavior-patterns in the universe is ever possible. For time is open; there is always a next case, which may or may not conform to the formulas already elaborated. From this highly speculative consideration it should be evident that to postulate the mathematical determinability of any actual—e.g., human—situation does not entail philosophical determinism—the assertion that the situation could not have been otherwise than it was; and does not, therefore, refute the "emergent" character of human and other traits which stand "on a 'higher level' of existence [the inner quotation marks are Nagel's] than are those with which physics and chemistry are concerned." It remains true and will always remain true, despite Nagel's centrifugal intellectualizing, that "the methods employed by these disciplines cannot be adequate to the study of the higher emergent qualities."

What is true in an exact way upon a mathematico-physical level of analysis is true in a looser way upon any other level. "Explain" human behavior psychologically or by social statistics or in whatever terms you please; yet the really important, epoch-moulding, historically decisive actions of men have a way of defying the best laid predictions. Hence, while I do not in the least "argue for the *exclusion* of the logical methods employed in the positive sciences from the study of social problems" (italics mine; does Nagel really believe that all his opponents are so stupid?) I do emphatically declare that "the human scene is so discontinuous with the 'lower levels' of nature that a common logic of inquiry cannot be *adequate* to all of them" (italics again mine) and that "problems affecting human destiny must be investigated on the basis of canons of validity and intelligibility which differ radically from those used in the natural sciences."

What are these essentially human canons? They cannot be formularized; but every work of great literature, as distinct from merely clever or entertaining literature, is the expression of an attempt, through the perspective of one man and one age, to rediscover them. Consider the *Katha Upanishad*, the *Oresteia*,

the *Symposium*, the *Sermon on the Mount*, the *Purgatorio*, *Hamlet*, *The Brothers Karamazoff:* does not each of these investigate "problems affecting human destiny . . . on the basis of canons of validity and intelligibility which differ radically from those used in the natural sciences"? Would Nagel say that their wisdom could be stated just as accurately (though no doubt less pleasurably) in logical propositions capable, in principle at least, of verification by the strict techniques of science? I assume that he would reply in this fashion, for I do not see what other reply the logic of his doctrine leaves open. Probably he would add, in the earlier manner of I. A. Richards, that what gives a literary masterpiece its distinctive character and importance is not anything of cognitive value which it imparts to the reader's intelligence but merely the psycho-physical effects which it produces upon his organism. This is how positivists usually reply when confronted with the question of the meaning and value of literature.

There is an element of sheer truism here. Hardly anyone doubts that to read a work of literature with appreciation produces psycho-physical changes in the reader. Anything to which our awareness responds, at whatever level, produces *some* kind of psycho-physical change. Although a cry of "Fire!", the binomial theorem, and Macbeth's soliloquy "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow . . ." stir us in different ways, they must all stir us somehow if we are aware of them at all. But the important thing is that they stir us in their several ways not as a blow causes us to groan, by simple mechanical reaction, but *because of what they mean.* Emotive and cognitive are inseparable aspects of every act of awareness. It is true that some emotions are obstacles to some kinds of cognition, as when fear or pride obstructs objective appraisal of a matter. (I suspect such obstacles in the positivist's case, as he doubtless suspects them in mine.) This familiar fact points to the conclusion that our best wisdom comes to us in a context of mature and controlled emotions, not that it can or should escape any emotional entanglement at all. In the long run it is through the medium of emotional maturity that any sound "canons of validity and intelligibility" must come.

Literalists will complain that I am vague. Maybe, but the greater part of life's problems is vague. We clarify where we can, and that is good, but we delude ourselves if we pretend that clear-cut objective techniques are a hundred percent applicable to all our problems. They aren't. The most important of human problems—the search for values by which to live and the experiential testing of such values both inwardly and outwardly—cannot be settled by scientific techniques alone. Responsible valuing is different in kind from public experimentation; which is not, however, to deny their interrelations.

The issue is of crucial importance for education. During the last thirty years liberal education has felt an increasing emphasis on the social sciences at the expense of the humanistic disciplines. So far as this trend has developed a more intelligently active social conscience together with more objective methods of discovering what the social facts really are, it has been productive of good. But there is a debit side: too often students are encouraged in the false notion that ability to handle social statistics is a more important educational aim than the discipline of what the Stoics accurately called the Inner Self. By this epithet the Stoics meant, and we must mean, something very much more than "the sheer vividness and the emotional overtones of ideas" which Nagel regards as the only criterion of truth left when the adequacy of scientific techniques has been rejected. Truth is more organic than that, and the methods of seeking it are not reducible to any one formula. The basic aim of education now and tomorrow is what it has always been: the discipline and encouragement of discriminating sensitivity to the best values which speak, or may speak, within men's hearts. Education has other aims too, and they are sufficiently well known, but this inward discipline of heart and mind must come first. *Hamlet* and the binomial theorem are both serviceable catalysts for this primary attainment, but *Hamlet* is the more indispensable. Techniques for handling Gallup Poll results and for blueprinting future societies belong farther down in the scale. They have their own kind of importance, but it should not be confused with man's primal needs.

Twelve Scarabs For The Living

By R. P. Blackmur

I

Terror Treed

Where courage shaped at manhood left me freed,
now clearer freedom is, and sweeter air,
in actual rejoiced-in fear, in terror treed.
It is the final excellence of despair
unfetters, and reveals, the full deed.

II

The Skin of the Soul

If righteousness without its faith is sin
and faith without its sin is empty act,
how shall the armed man plea? or soul save skin?
Between the lover and his murder pact
there is the third lost face, self looking in.

III

Second Drawer

Inside the desk-life of this chartered ease
I keep—that lockless unopenable second drawer—
my great grand uncle Charles's Civil War,
his cavalry pistols and his diaries.
The martyr batters at the wardrobe door.

IV

Theme for a Novel

Crossed loyalties that graze together,
new love betrayed the old defiled,
make any an immoderate tether.

Nothing thrives here but runs wild.
My house lies open to the weather.

V

Heil!

Scream in your man's voice out
the last biling of staff and rod.
Stand straight, click heels, up arm, and shout!
How should you know, through Christless span,
—O single-throated, singled man—
how all that foulness covets God.

VI

Declaration

The one burgling masked word
the burst sound of the self rent
is not mine nor my accord:
I come as one sent
from violate to violent.

VII

A Fresh Encounter

Again severalty falls
the vast like and dislike
the rich rage and love's small change
in the same loins
the full and fell
awake for loving use

VIII

Tush, said the Godless Man

How shall the pierced hope become a skill
or unassayable dread make a true die?
How keep an open or a candid eye
if the spider is more righteous than the fly?
My mouth makes chicken-fat of all my will.

IX

Wisp O' the Will

For eighteen years this mouth has lied:
there is no man nor woman
I can lie down beside
and cry O God give me to hide.
Never could I have cried from pride;
nor can I in humiliation will the human.

X

To Enobarbus

(the Fish-hawk atop Prospect Harbor Beacon)

Thanks once again for dark, old screamer, and
give thanks yourself, old eagle-feeder, fisher-king:
The night, full-armed, all-wiving, young, descends,
descends, O barred Osprey, upon us both
to blot the sick valiance than cannot act.

XI

Phoenix as Foundling

Ah, foundling Phoenix, from the first wing rush
will ashes fall, of all that was renewed,
the ignominy, the growing good, the hush:
recovering through change the changeless mood.
This pyre, O Phoenix, lights new-foundling blood.

XII

Enantiodromia

Note well, you who have hearted hands,
that inching, loveless lust, one detail more,
will bring you where the Vision stands:
half unexorcisable ancestor
and half your newest self, turned grudging whore.

The Park Street Cemetery

By Robert Lowell

In back of the Athenaeum, only
The dead are poorer. Here frayed
Cables wreathe the spreading obelisk,
And a clutter of Bible and weeping willows
Preserves the stern surnames: Adams,
Otis, Hancock, Prescott or Revere;
Franklin's mother rests in hope.

Dusty leaves and the frizzled lilac
Liven this elders' garden with baroque
And prodigal embellishments; but the ground
Has settled *in saecula saeculorum;*
The dead cannot see Easter crowds
On Boston Common, or Beacon Hill
Where the Irish hold the Golden Dome.

Where are Sam Adams and Cotton Mather?
The baits and Paradises of the Puritan Dracos,
Renascence eschatologies
That fascinated like a Walpurgis Nacht,
And the Promised Land envisioned at Plymouth?
The graveyard's face is painted with facts
And filagreed swaths of forget-me-nots.

The Tactics of Motivation

By Kenneth Burke

In considering the three articles by Messrs. Dewey, Nagel, and Hook, one's initial embarrassment may be in not quite knowing whether he would enroll under some variety of "naturalism" (if not quite their variety, then a naturalism of sorts) or whether he should look for an appealing label among the brands of thought which Mr. Dewey lists for the opposition: supernaturalism, non-naturalism, anti-naturalism, extra-naturalism.

For one thing, we must grant that naturalism (including the "materialism" which Mr. Dewey would exclude, with a promptness almost amounting to acerbity, from the naturalist orbit) has made splendid "hark ye" contributions to the study of religion. The secular critique of religion has assembled an impressive lore on the misuse of religion, both as regards the deliberate exploitation of religious loyalties for the maintenance of injustice, and as regards the devices of self-deception whereby a sincere and honest man may, through the labyrinthine subterfuges of symbolism, hide his devilish motives, even from himself, behind the name of God. And one might well test the sincerity of a man's religion by inquiring whether he was a careful reader of this secular lore. For any man truly religious will seek in every way to guard against the misuse of religion on the part of both others and himself; and secular history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and similar disciplines can provide him with the relevant admonitory information and speculation.

On the other hand, theologians and religious psychologists often have a kind of thoroughness which secular experimentalism lacks, as regards the posing of motivational problems. For whereas religious introspection takes us, however waveringly, into the depths of *conscience*, close to the centre at which the decisions of moral agents originate, characteristic secular psychologies even keep us outside the surface of *consciousness*, preferring to study human conduct in the terms of *motion* rather than the terms of *action*.

There is a radio program in which several comedians compete by telling jokes on assigned subjects. Their relative success is measured by a device for registering the intensity of the laughter with which the audience at the broadcast greets each of the jokes. And the highest rating recorded on this "laugh-meter" is taken to indicate the "best" joke, or at least the *favorite* joke, as attested by a public judgment impartially recorded. Perhaps we should say the *momentarily* favorite joke; for there is of course no way of indicating which of the jokes will be remembered and retold afterwards. And though a "laugh-meter" might also be designed to register the duration of laughter as well as its intensity, with ratings got by the product of the two, I believe that this particular device judges by intensity alone. In any case, by its use, one gets a kind of "spontaneous voting," with certain superiorities over the machinery of the verbal ballot. (The ballot is a more purely "rationalistic" way of voting, whereas I should think that the "laugh-metric" vote would be more "empirical".)

I confess that this radio program lures me greatly. For along with the entertainment of the stories, and the drama-atop-drama that goes with the competition among the storytellers, there is this pressing puzzle for literary criticism: to decide just how one should take this "laugh-meter." I am sure that none of the three naturalists who introduced the "Failure of Nerve" controversy would take it as a fair example of "scientific method" applied to literary criticism. Yet would they not at least grant that it is the burlesque, or *reductio ad absurdum*, of scientific method? That is, though its path to a judgment is simpler than the complicated

nature of the subject-matter justifies, a scientist could hardly object to its *ideal*. Nor is the device by any means unreasonable; for jokes are traditionally greeted by laughter, hence a device for impartially appraising the degree of laughter caused by a joke does in a sense record a public judgment on that joke. And it does so in a way that could not be done with anywhere near the same precision were the judges to attempt appraising by their judgment alone the relative degrees of appreciation manifested by the audience. If the judges were placed where they could follow the jokes, they would be in part affected by their personal preferences. And they could approach somewhat the perfection of the "laugh-meter" only by being placed, like the "laugh-meter" itself, in a position from which they could not follow the *jokes*, but could only record the *response*.

Again, it is said that the air-conditioning plant in a movie theatre must operate at a much swifter pace when the movie is a "thriller," since the higher rate of respiration in the audience causes a proportionate increase in the degree of humidity which the air-conditioning plant is designed to rectify. This struck me as providing a much more "scientific" test of the relative excitement in pictures than could be got through the more purely "rationalistic" procedure of counting the box-office receipts (though the public aspect of the box-office test seems in turn a closer approximation to scientific modes of public judgment than are to be reached by purely literary modes of appraisal).

What is wrong with these devices as evaluators? There is nothing wrong with their judgment, so far as it goes; for that is nearly perfect. Further, one could employ such devices for quite discriminating work. For instance, one could try telling the same story (naturally to different audiences of similar status) at varying tempos, or at varying pitches, or with varying kinds of imagery, or with varying kinds of preparation, etc.; and I believe one could, with the help of the meter-readings, make some very valuable discoveries about the relative effectiveness of such changes. And out of such investigations, I am sure, one could derive new and accurate observations about the ingredients of which

a literary work is composed. We all know, for instance, that a good actor develops an "instinct" for timing, as a very effective line can be spoiled by being said a little too soon or a little too late; but at present our critical discriminations here can't go much beyond the point of a general outcry of enthusiasm for the player's "perfect timing."

No, the objection to such devices would not be in their reduction of a qualitative order to terms of quantity, for nothing is more qualitative than the weather, yet I see nothing wrong with such scientific translations of the weather as we get in thermometers and barometers. The objection arises when philosophers of science are loath to grant that this very capacity of science demands a compensatory counterpart, variously named "intuition," "imagination," "vision," "revelation," etc. For though one could scientifically break a work of art into many ingredients, and by test arrive at some extremely subtle and perfectly just discriminations about these ingredients, it is when confronting the *synthesis* of the ingredients that the scientific method becomes inadequate.

The "laugh-meter," for instance, could make a perfectly good judgment about the relative effectiveness of two different tempos. Or the air-conditioning device might be so developed as to give us a record of the different degrees of humidification (hence different degrees of thrill) in the different parts of a drama. But what the "laugh-meter" could not do would be to make discriminatory judgments about the ways in which one should *combine* the various elements that go to make up an esthetic whole. Every combination would be a *new act*, that might subsequently be broken down for scientific discrimination, but in itself was a synthesis. One can synthesize chemicals even by accident, as one merely throws things together and sees what happens. But an imaginative synthesis, including the formulation of scientific laws, is not of this order. It takes its shape from *final* causes, however vague their formulation in the mind of the synthesizer.

Hence, reverting now to the matter of "theology," the fact that religion and metaphysics are in essence *unifying* approaches, dealing with the fields of all the special disciplines at their area

of *convergence*, would seem to argue that their centre of motivation must necessarily lie outside the orbit of scientific method. The scientist, of course, makes syntheses within his specialty; and there are tests within the specialty for checking on the validity of the syntheses. But if one offered a synthesis of the fields covered by the various disciplines, which of the disciplines could possibly be competent to evaluate it? Where each specialty gets its worth precisely by moving towards diversity, how could any specialty possibly deal with a project that offered a *unification* among the diversities? Or, otherwise put: if one were to write on the *interrelatedness* among ten specialties, one would be discussing something that lay outside the jurisdiction of them all.

From this point of view, perhaps the old controversy over "faith" and "knowledge" might be rephrased in terms of the "unity-diversity" pair. An assertion in the category of "faith" is a *unifying* assertion. Any practical or imaginative act has this initial unifying quality, spontaneously combining a host of factors that could be "broken down" into as many different specialized components as we can systematically isolate in our scientific disciplines.

Both faith (a philosophical synthesis that must recommend itself on dialectical grounds rather than by strictly scientific tests) and knowledge (the kinds of analytic observation that develop out of the perspective established by the faith) are necessary to a complete dialectic for the discussion of human motives. And a literary man who might begin his speculations about motives from the fact that his poems or fictions are obviously to be treated as synthesizing acts of faith rather than as instances of "scientific method," would perforce be shunted into the position of "anti-naturalism" insofar as naturalism thoroughly identifies itself with scientific method. The nature of the medium is such that it simply cannot represent "scientific method," since art is not a science. Hence, if apologists of science leave poetry only a choice between science and the notion of intuition as a dark cult, the poet must perforce choose the name for the dark cult as the name for his experience of motivation.

Mr. Hook's reference to "faith in intelligence" is interesting as a dialectical device that obliterates the distinction between "faith" and "knowledge." Perhaps it is another way of doing what the Spinozistic motive, formulated as the *amor intellectualis Dei,* was designed to do. Since "knowledge is power," one can also get variants like "love and power," or "faith and power"; and since power is exemplified in war, you can get Yeats's version for the two motives that sprang from the eggs of Leda, "love and war" (which, we learn from his complaints as an old man, can degenerate into "lust and rage," as "faith in intelligence" could in a corresponding degeneration become "love of war"). We might note that the "faith and knowledge" alignment could be read as "act and scene," if "faith" were conceived in the spirit of the expression, an "act of faith," and "knowledge" were a knowledge of the scenic conditions in which that act could be enacted (scenic conditions that became progressively reduced to purely naturalistic limits). Mr. Hook's expression, "faith in knowledge," could similarly be classed as an *attitude of the agent* directed towards *agency;* for "intelligence," like "scientific method," can be interpreted as a *means* rather than a *substance.* Yeats's pair, particularly the "lust and rage" variant, is "idealistic," both members being properties of the agent.

I pause to review some of these possible transformations, so as to suggest what I mean by my remarks about "synthesis" as a unifying act of "faith." So far as I can see, there is no "scientific" way of testing these different calculi. They are developed purely by the exploitation of dialectical resources, and each has a kind of relevance. Each in its way, seizes an assertion by the scruff of the neck, as an "act of faith." Once such a synthesis has been enacted, it can to be sure be further broken down into parts. The *fides* can seek its complement, its scholastic parallel, in the materials of *intellectus* (beginning with the enterprise that goes with the translation of the faith from a largely implicit state into an explicit equivalent, an equivalent which in varying degrees becomes less a "translation" of the original than a "betrayal" of the original).

Or, in given cases, we might better expect a synthesizing work of conceptual cast to contain a mixture of the two motives: it will center in a "vision" (or let us take a neutral synonym, "perspective"); this vision will have been asserted atop the state of knowledge as then constituted; and one will, in the course of filling out his assertion, try to demonstrate the scope, relevance, and reasonableness of his calculus by whatever logical and empirical testimony he can master.

But the vision, or perspective, or calculus cannot be scientifically tested, since it is neither true nor false, but an act. And one will "suffer" the kind of knowledge that is the reciprocal of his act. (We state here, in a modified form, the process embodied in tragedy: out of the agent's action there grows a corresponding passion, and from the sufferance of this passion there arises a knowledge of his act, a knowledge that also to a degree transcends his act.)

However, perspectives are not often as private in their inception as the naturalists would encourage us to believe. Even revelations from "on high" are usually the codification of tribal values, otherwise they could not recruit adherents in any great numbers. (Thus with the two testaments that were, by an egregious and fatal misnomer, called a "book" whereas they should have been called a "library.") And behind both artistic and scientific syntheses, there is always a kind of "collective revelation."

II

Men seek for vocabularies that will be serviceable *reflections* of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are *selections* of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain situations, function as a *deflection* of reality. With such conditions in mind, how might one best proceed to select a vocabulary (a perspective, a systematically interrelated terminology) that might lay claim to be central for the discussion of human affairs and human relationships, and for the placement of cultural forms?

One must use some "representative anecdote" as a form in conformity with which his vocabulary is to be developed. The behaviorist, for instance, uses his experiments with the conditioned reflex as the anecdote about which to form his vocabulary for the discussion of human motives, but this is not a "representative" anecdote; for whether one insists "scientifically" upon classing men with animals, the fact remains that one cannot find a representative case of human motivation in animals, since they lack the properties of *linguistic* rationalization. A representative case of human motivation must have a strongly linguistic bias, whereas animal experimentation necessarily neglects this.

If the originating anecdote is not representative, a vocabulary developed in strict conformity with it will not be representative. This embarrassment is usually avoided in practice by a break in the conformity at some crucial point; this means in effect that the vocabulary ceases to have the basis which is claimed for it. The very man who might tell you that people are but chemicals will induce responses in people by talking to them, whereas he would not try to make a chemical behave by linguistic inducement. And to say that people are "chemicals that talk" is just about the same thing as saying that people aren't "just chemicals," since chemicals don't talk. I do not think that it is merely "meaningless" to call people "just chemicals," however; for such ideas, or perhaps better images, are the embodiment of attitudes, and in attitudes there are incipient programs of action. Hence, when one has discovered all the primary attributes with which a man implicitly or explicitly endows such a "god-term" (or ultimate "ground" or "title"), one may limit accordingly the range of actions one should normally expect of him. Out of any one image, or dogma, most anything may follow; but in proportion as it becomes modified by contextual development, its range of probable eventualities narrows.

If one builds a vocabulary at random, it lacks the value of a perspective, or rationale, being merely eclectic. And in any case, the vocabulary but avoids the *appearance* of an act of faith by being an assortment of minute and imperceptible acts of faith.

And any eclecticism is a mild kind of demoralization, and a challenge to invent a new perspective, a "synopsis," that will bring the disjunct vocabulary into ordered relationship. But insofar as one would produce such a summation, or synoptic rationale, he is again faced with the need of some originating principle such as the choice of a "representative anecdote" provides for the midrib of his organization. The anecdote must have a form, so that he can contemplate it and proceed to build his vocabulary about it in an orderly fashion. Yet it must not be too confined a form, too special a form, a form too far aside from the main problems of human substance and human motivation.

In proposing that we should select drama as the "representative anecdote" for a calculus of motives, I encounter the embarrassment I originally spoke of, in trying to decide whether, in terms of naturalism, this perspective should be classed as "naturalistic," "anti-naturalistic," or even "supernaturalistic." For though I do not think there is anything intrinsically anti-scientific about the choice of drama as a "representative case" of human motivations, the dramatistic perspective itself places the sciences as *dissolutions* of drama.

True, for many situations the vocabularies derived by the dissolution of drama are better suited than purely dramatistic coordinates. And the various scientific disciplines do well to perfect these partial perspectives, for the analysis of their particular fields. The dramatistic perspective counsels resistance, however, whenever the attempt is made to follow the norms of these specialized vocabularies (all of which could be classed as variant terminologies of *motion*) in discussing the human order of motives (which requires a terminology of *action*).

This distinction between action and motion can be empirically indicated. An act has the added motive (or the added "dimension") of rationality, by which is meant the particular kind of purposive conduct that goes with the use of language, or symbolism. Language is, empirically, the extra dimension in human motives; and the empirical fact of this extra dimension offers the dialectical grounds for asserting categorically, independently of

scientific experiment, that the discussion of human motives cannot with accuracy be reduced to the level of the physical or sheerly biological, no matter how high an opinion one may have of the "matter" of which these levels are composed, unless it were found that a symbolism quite like human language figured in the relationships among things and organisms at these levels. (As for the few cases in which domestic animals respond to words, one should "dramatistically" interpret these moments not as moments that reduce the human dimension to the merely animal dimension, but rather as moments where the few words enable the animals slightly to transcend the animal dimension, just as complex dialectical operations, developing imagery to conceive beyond imagery, may enable men slightly to transcend the human dimension.)

But though these distinctions of level can be as empirically established as any distinctions in a world whose parts shade off into one another (so that every division can be redefined as a merger), I will grant that one can frequently find anti-naturalistic and supernaturalistic discussions of human motivation more revealing than the strictly scientific varieties, because thought theological in cast is regularly "dramatistic" in nature. This ingredient is also true of political philosophies, though usually with not such thoroughness of development as we find in theologies, with their extreme sensitivity to the relationship between the *scene* or *ground* of human actions and the acts enacted on this ground.

As I have observed elsewhere, the primary "dramatic ratio" is that whereby the quality of the *act* reflects the quality of the *scene* in which it is placed. And there is a derivative consideration, which I call the "lyric ratio," that observes a similar relation between scene and agent, with the quality of the *agent* sharing the quality of the *scene,* as the thing contained may synecdochically share in the quality of the whole containing it. One can readily see how a strict obedience to the logic of these ratios suggests a kind of "symmetrical necessity for the existence of God" as the ground of human morality and human personality. For if act and agent are to share the quality of the scene, the scene that contains them must possess personal and moral attributes to serve as

the motivational sources of the personal and moral. Rather than "reducing" moral and personal elements into references to non-moral and impersonal contexts (that is, discussing the moral and personal *in terms of* non-moral and impersonal conditions) a strict obedience to the dramatistic ratios would have to situate moral and personal principles in the ground itself, and then "deduce" these from the ground.

Whatever one may think of this theological obedience to the requirements of the two ratios (the dramatic or scene-act ratio, and the lyric or scene-agent ratio), I think the formulation serves, on the purely *naturalistic* level, as a handy way of "anticipating" the distinction between naturalistic and supernaturalistic strategies of motivation. The supernaturalistic strategies attribute to the scene the qualities that they would then derive as motivations of act and agent. But the naturalistic strategies are content to sacrifice this strict synecdochic kinship, allowing for the origin of ultimate motivating principles within the agents themselves, regardless of what may be the quality of the scene in which these agents are placed. In brief, they assign to man an *inherent* or *intrinsic* dignity, rather than seeking to derive this dignity from "God."

There is a paradox of definition that may, in a roundabout way, come to the aid of the naturalist here. One may think of definition in either tribal (familial) or geometrical notions of substance. By tribal or familial definition, I refer to that prototype of thought according to which creatures and creation are descended from a creator, and share "substantially" in the quality of this "ancestral cause" from which they are derived. "Tribal" or "familial" definition would involve any variant of the idea of biological descent, with the substance of the offspring being derived from the substance of the parents. We here contemplate an area where the meanings of "general," "generic," and "genetic" subtly overlap.

By geometric definition, or "definition by location," I have in mind a mode of definition got, as the very etymology of the word suggests, by ways of *delimiting* a thing, of marking off a thing's

boundaries, of *de-termining* a thing by "placing" it in a context of things-not-it. As there was a paradox of substance implicit in the prototype of familial descent (since a human creature descended from a god shares "substantially" in the quality of this ancestry, so that he both is and is not divine, somewhat as we can avoid saying that we were wrong by saying that we were "substantially" right); so there is a paradox of substance implicit in the geometrical, or contextual, strategy of definition. For a thing's context is what the thing is *not;* hence, to define a thing in terms of its context is to define it, not in terms of what it *is*, but in terms of what it *isn't*. The total context of this page, for instance, is everything in the world *except* this page. Hence, were I to define the page contextually, or by location, I should define it in terms of everything but itself.

Thus, I believe there is a deeper reason than a mere matter of style behind Spinoza's decision to construct his *Ethics* after the manner of Euclidean demonstration, as a series of steps from proposition to Q. E. D. His treatment of substance was in itself *more geometrico*, hence quite in keeping with the nature of the contextual paradox. Hence his basic formula to the effect that all definition is *negation (omnis determinatio est negatio)*. In brief, he defined any part of the universe by placing it in the whole, which was its context (and obviously the whole was what the part was *not*). Hence, to treat the part in terms of the whole (or, as he put it, *sub specie aeternitatis*), was to consider it in terms of its "other," or in terms of its *negation*. This aspect of Spinoza was subsequently explicitly intensified in the philosophy of Hegel.

Because Spinoza's pantheistic equating of God and Nature could serve as a transition from supernaturalism to naturalism, his paradox of definition could be taken over in purely naturalistic thought. One will note its presence in Mr. Nagel's remarks about the scientist's search for the "conditions" or "context" in which such manifestations as we call "mind" can occur. And I believe that we could better understand the dialectical paradoxes underlying his speculations at this point if we traced them back to Spinozistic naturalism, where the philosopher formally and explicitly

recognizes what Mr. Nagel would seem to deny: namely, to treat "mind" in terms of its "conditions" is to "negate" it. Similarly, Mr. Dewey's desire to find a kind of unified vocabulary that would resolve the "split" between "mind" and "matter," or the mental and physical, would seem to aim at a variant of the Spinozistic substance which, having extension and thought as its modes, must itself be a ground that is neither and/or both.

In any event, one may note that geometric substance readily lends itself to the *humanistic* split between personal agents and impersonal scene, with each providing a distinct order of motives (a split that naturalistic poets have often idealistically bridged by the variants of the "pathetic fallacy" whereby the imagery of nature can serve as a terminology for conveying states of mind). One may further note that the two strategies of definition, the tribal and the contextual, are not kept wholly distinct in any thinker. Supernaturalists, for instance, have treated God as indeterminately "causal ancestor" and "ultimate ground." And whatever may be the motives behind Mr. Dewey's desire to redeem "matter" from its former low status while at the same time merging "mind" with a substance that possesses this more dignified and active nature, we may note that the derivation of "mind" and "matter" alike from such a principle, as its ground, could serve well as a naturalistic variant of the tribal strategy. At least, if one calls the natural ground "active," and means it literally, one has thereby just as truly read a personal principle into the natural ground as the supernaturalist reads into his doctrine of God as ground. And if he does not mean it literally, but speaks of "action" in a merely figurative sense, as one speaks of a machine's "action," then so far as I can see, he cannot consistently maintain the position that "naturalism" differs from "materialism," which is by definition the treatment of motives in terms of motion.

* * *

[Mr. Burke's article will be concluded in the Summer number]

Down World

By Mark Van Doren

No animal so flattens to the ground,
Hiding and sliding, as clear water will:
Its belly nowhere different from the back
Of the sloped earth it hugs, head downward still.

Spineless, it takes all shapes except the serpent's
With his neck hooped, when anger in him stares.
Water is faceless; for it leaves its features,
Spendthrift, on the very stone it wears.

Men cannot pick it up, the stubborn creeper.
Jointless it lies, head downward, sucking sand.
Yet they will try; there is no older plaything
Than gravity delayed, than banking land,

Than the filled gulch, than levelness extended
Till a wave backward laps, till boats can ride.
So the dam holds. But deep at its foundation
Heave the sunk shoulders, not to be denied.

The sodden eyelids, weary of themselves,
Dream of the crack to come, the pouring through;
Then the parched bed, abrasive, and the close
Going once again down world and true.

Song With Words

By Helen Eustis

This little girl was always writing, but she told no one, not even herself, what she wrote. With her chewed pencil between her thin waxy fingers she would drive the words across the page as quickly as children before a whip. Yet though they ran in straight written lines, their movement within their meaning was so repeated and circling as to be no meaning at all.

The little girl was always writing the disjointed words—or was it that the words wrote the little girl? In any case, the words were very private and important to her; so private that she could not even bear to reread them herself once she had written them, but would destroy her papers as soon as they were filled, and would quickly cover them with her foot if, from a fallen scrap, the dislocated words stared at her too boldly.

Sometimes her mother would say to her, "What are you writing, dear?"

The little girl would look up. "Nothing," she would say fiercely, and immediately tear the paper to tiny pieces to be carefully stowed in her pocket.

Once, because the mother was curious at never finding any of these scraps of writing either in the little girl's waste basket or in the pockets of her soiled dresses, she searched the little girl's room while the child was away at school, but she found nothing. The truth was that the little girl always carefully chewed the scraps up after she had torn them and threw the balls of wet paper down the toilet.

Her mother was a fat, pale, blonde woman who could seldom

wake up in time for breakfast, so that many mornings the little girl, who had to be at school on time, and her father, who had to be at work, would find themselves facing each other across a table crowded with electrical devices: a glass coffee percolator, an egg cooker, a toaster.

The little girl would come downstairs shortly after her father; would kiss him good morning, and go around to the other side of the table to her accustomed chair. When they eyed each other so, silently, it always seemed that it was the little girl who was waiting for the father to speak, and the father who searched for something to say. As the space without words lengthened, it sometimes even seemed that the little girl was consciously allowing her father silence in which to betray himself.

Often her father gave up and hid behind his newspaper without speaking; or he would at last say words in a husky voice which seemed to come out unexpectedly to himself, as: "Well, what do you have in school today?"

The little girl would look at him coldly through her glassy, bulging eyes, and then say, "Today we're studying the natural resources of Brazil and Argentina. Want me to tell you?"

"Well, I think I remember those from when I studied them," he would say hastily, and erect his newspaper before him. When he put it down again, he would find the little girl, her breakfast uneaten before her, scribbling across and across a scrap of paper. As soon as she felt him watching her, she would start, cram the paper into her pocket, thrust her pencil over her ear, and begin to gobble her food without a word.

Once his wife spoke to him about the little girl's writing. As they came home from the movies together on a winter night, she said to him, "John, why do you think Clara's always writing? What do you think she's always writing about?"

"Jesus, I don't know," he said. "Why would a kid always be writing that way?"

His wife shook her head. They walked in silence a moment. Then she said, "Her report cards are always good. Her teachers like her fine. I guess she's just a bright kid."

"Yeah."

They went on without saying anything for another block. Then the man said ruminatively, "She's an awful bright kid."

His wife tightened her grasp on his arm. They turned up the walk of their house. He selected the house key from the ring and put it in the lock. Then he left it there without turning it and took his wife in his arms. They hung mouth to mouth for a full minute. When they drew apart, their breath threw up a mingled cloud of stteam in the cold night.

The little girl had friends from school who would walk down the street to her house with her, but she never asked them in. Her mother would say to her, "Clara, why don't you have some of the kids to lunch, huh? You could have a couple of other little girls and we could go to a show, maybe."

Clara would turn her long pale face up to her mother then, and it would seem that she rolled and unrolled many sentences in her mind during the moment before she said, "I don't think I want to, Mama."

Soon the mother stopped asking her this, for the only child she saw walking down the street with her any more was a little colored girl who lived in the next block. The little colored girl was pretty and pert, and though she was only a year or two older than Clara, she wore run-over high-heeled shoes, and painted her lips and cheeks. Clara's mother, watching from the window, would see them walking down the street together, Clara pale and serious, her long thin legs encased in long brown socks; her pale straight hair hanging from her round beret; walking a little pigeon-toed, and holding her brief case still at her side. The litle colored girl would have her coat pulled tight across her swinging hips, and she would cock her head from side to side, laughing as Clara talked up to her, questioned her very seriously.

Finally, Clara's mother said to her at lunch one day, "Clara, I don't think you ought to be running around with colored kids. Mary Ann's a nice kid, but—"

"All right, Mama," said Clara, turning her eyes on her mother.

"What I mean is, Clara, I don't want—"

All right, Mama!" said Clara, but louder, and with her thin white fingers clasped around her fork as if it were a weapon.

Clara brought home one report card with a bad mark in the space labelled "Conduct." Her mother showed the card to her father. "Ask her why she got the bad mark," she said.

He looked up from under the lamp where he was reading. "Why don't you ask her?" he said.

"You ought to ask her. You're her father."

"Aw, Florence, the kid's all right."

He tried to hand back the report card, but she wouldn't put out her hand to take it.

"No, we ought to find out, honey. Please ask her." She went behind his chair and leaned over. She kissed the top of his head.

"O. K.," he said.

When the child came from doing her lessons upstairs, he looked up from his magazine.

"Hello, Papa," she said. Her bulging brown eyes caught yellow images of the lamp by which he read. She looked like a thin yellow cat staring into a fire, a little hypnotized.

He pulled the report card from his vest pocket. "Clara," he said, "I want to know what happened to your mark in conduct this month. It wasn't like this any other time." He turned the card over nervously.

"I hit Ray Feininger."

"You hit him?" said her father.

"I hit him in class."

"But why did you hit him, Clara? That doesn't sound like a lady."

She stood before her father without moving. She said, "I hit him." Her face showed both how much she knew and how little she would tell.

Her father hitched in his chair; flopped the magazine over on his knee.

"But Clara, you must have had a reason. You don't just go around hitting little boys, I know."

She did not move. "He was sitting next to me and I hit him. Goodnight, Papa." She walked to him and put her pale lips on his forehead. She turned and went out of the living room, up the stairs.

Always, after the little girl was in bed with her light out, she would sing to herself. First she would sing songs that she heard over the radio; songs that she had learned in school. Then, as she approached sleep, her singing would lose the accustomed patterns of melody, and she would improvise songs of monotonous tune, and very long. It might have been that since she could not write in the dark, she would sing the things, then, that she was always writing in the light. She seemed to spin a web of sound, like a singing spider, excreting a thin shining thread of song, which crossed and recrossed itself; ran back and forth as quickly as the words she wrote across scraps of paper. The songs she sang ran in circles of tunes, repeating themselves endlessly until at last she fell asleep, with words so juxtaposed that their meaning was in code—or they had no meaning.

From downstairs, her mother and father could only occasionally distinguish the thin hum of her voice among the other sounds in the silence of the house. Sometimes, too, after they had gone to bed, they would hear the little girl mumbling her improvised songs in her sleep. Their bedroom door and hers opened onto a shared bathroom, so it semed to be only a peculiar vibration in her voice that carried her singing as a faint murmur through the two closed doors. It was a rather frightening sound to find among the creakings of the night house, and the mother and father, hearing it, would move together across their double bed, fearing the shining net of song that floated invisibly in the darkness around them like the snare of a spider's web.

Then one night the mother and father came home late from a party, feeling fine, feeling exhilarated, coming home in a taxi, where the husband kissed the wife many times. When they got home, he had trouble getting the key in the lock and she giggled.

"Shut up," he said, and pinched her.

They came into the house in an agony of suppressed laughter.

They pretended to climb the stairs very carefully, but actually they made a great clatter.

"You'll wake the kid," the husband whispered.

"Shhh!" said the wife, her finger to her lips.

They tiptoed into the bedrom with elaborate precautions for quiet. It was painted and hazy with moonlight there; so bright, that coming from the dark hall, neither thought of turning on the light.

They undressed quickly, struck white with moonlight. The wife was a great white mountain, the husband a thin white branch. They crawled onto the bed as quickly as they could, and for a long time neither heard the thin creeping mumble of the little girl's song, at first an indistinguishable whisper among the other night shiftings and rustlings; then an insistent repetition, a voice speaking over and over a sentence in the language of another planet.

At last they lay apart on their backs in the double bed, their heads turned to each other. The husband's face was silhouetted to a lump of shadow against the white moonlight; but the wife's was painted with as many mountains and valleys as the moon's own.

They lay, panting a little, smiling at each other. They lay in complete uncontrol; sunk in relaxation. Then, at the same moment, they stiffened; they became conscious of the little weaving sound, creeping into the room, moving as minutely as a dust mote in the moonlight.

"Listen to that!" the husband whispered.

The wife turned her head and lay in a position of attention.

"She oughtn't to do that, Florence. She ought to sleep quiet. What'd you give her for dinner?"

"Nothing to upset her."

Their whispers were crisp, yet tiny against the patterning of the low, broad-curving song.

"I'm going to get up," the man said. "I'm going in and see how she's sleeping."

Before the wife could even turn her head, he was out of bed

in a shudder, and in a nervous jerk had opened the bathroom door.

And there, modelled in broad, precise brushstrokes of moonlight, the little girl knelt on the bathroom floor in an attitude of prayer; the little girl knelt with her eye at the exact level of the keyhole. Her father and mother saw now that when she sang she looked as she did when she wrote—self-mesmerized, rapt. But instead of watching words move across paper, her eye was fixed at the exact level of the keyhole.

She knelt there frozen, hypnotized, her song continuing wordlessly. Her mother and father realized at once that they could never have heard so thin a piping through the thickness of more than one door.

Love Like a Capitol Hill

By Ruth Herschberger

Love like a capitol hill where the dome dares mold the sky,
Where pillars expose the catacombs, and shadow what there lies.

Love like a mighty structure, agape with figurines,
Studded with statues, serviced with page, sired by dreams.

Love where the steps rise thick and fast, where closeted voices hum,
Where the legislature makes laws of nature, and you wish you hadn't come.

Late Music

By Byron Vazakas

Step by step, reward and the just cause
arrive with spring, and among the
throngs of experience even the most
tragic become the beloved past:
Winter is a memory of childhood, and an
afternoon spent listening to my cousin
practicing Chopin, the waltzes cascading
through my picture book, with Mont Blanc
Literal in an icy glory of sun and snow.
Even the tidy reflections of my dying
aunt were swept into an ecstasy of ice,
glacial and brilliant among crescending
Notes. Glazed to detachment, they seemed much
less important; and her world, tormented
to the bone by debris of the past, found
peace, found nothingness, found that
Dreaming is a technique all can understand.
The desperate necessity somehow to escape
was frozen in that room, and in my book;
and in the wordless virtuosity of music
My aunt's vagaries, like mine, took shape, and
suddenly she saw a meaning in the past, like
Chopin's. Her romantic griefs, regrets,
nostalgias were clearly dramatized, and
Brought entire their strayed and crippled diffidence
like the diamond independence of broken glass.
Music became her true heart, athlete exceeding
trouble, come goaled to her perfection!
In the violet decline of the winter afternoon,
Her fingers strayed as though they would
retrieve, or add a chord to say . . .
or say, or merely indicate an end.

Discovery

By Fredrick Brantley

Slack-gaited now, you, like the puzzled hound,
Pause and lift to the wind nostrils of question.
Once stilled, comes the sad disquieting vision
Of fox and you, alone, pacing courtly universe
In ducal precision, in great woods no sound.

Yet this dream dissolves; all other hunters
Are not destroyed by flaming timber; their cries
Bell, fade, and across evil forest floor you try
New trails: as for a face which, turning your eyes,
You did not recognize but seek now to remember.

If that moment be but criminal joy, all worlds
Made one by the personal, no less dear or crude
The capture. Such peace drunkards or the lewd
Know, so balanced all objects be fountains of wine
Or else white flesh, drifting, innocent of time.

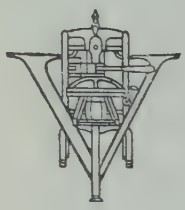
Some, I know, find man both blesséd and lost
Amidst their riot of furred and feathered host.
For here mind is swollen big as grandpa's parlor
When, angelic, they know the brave hare's hauteur,
And the noble donkey choirs O sweetly to heaven.

This more cunning St. Francis sought from birds,
Whose multitudinous cries, being only chirrs
In plowman's ears, became for him a brazen bell,
Lolling, whose discursive tongue filled holy air.
Rage clasped pity, were lovers fugitive and rare.

Even hero, fondling astute and secular rifle, leans
To the rich cannonade as if to an ominous bloom
Saved from childhood, out of the long night's dream
All about alleys of blazing or sinister rooms,
Pierced by the sound of his bright sword's clank.

All, all, being so caught up, are forced to share
A public doom, since this so cherished in private
Is mirrored in strangers' eyes. Still their gift
Of calm is held, seeing resolute anarchist's fate:
Torn and confused, confronting the forgotten face.

Now, in outraged time, when the meaning of each
Whirls like quail breaking cover, and is gone,
I, too, rattle the old sword in the empty house,
Read carefully my friends' letters, survey again
My father's beloved crime, his portrait, his home;
As I await the old chaos and again the discovery.



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BOOK REVIEWS

W. B. Yeats, 1865-1939: Joseph Hone. The Macmillan Co.

Since the day of William Butler Yeats's death in January, 1939, his poetic gifts have received many tributes, so many in fact that a small, murmuring undercurrent of dispraise may be expected to follow the critical appreciation which has been so lavishly bestowed upon his work during the last ten years of his life. Such a reaction against praise often follows the last chapter of a writer's career; and in the case of Yeats and since the moment of his death so nearly coincides with the beginning of a second world war, it does seem that the end of his life brought to a close a well defined period in twentieth century literature. I use the word "seem" advisedly, because much of what he has written remains uncollected and unedited; a variorum edition of his poems is yet to be published and a properly edited collection of his essays, prefaces and marginalia is yet to be done. Mr. Joseph Hone's authorized and recent biography of Yeats indicates the direction from which the wind is now blowing; the book is a lively book and is at moments highly entertaining, but it carries us far away from the values of Yeats's poetry and its meaning, and whether through carelessness, or a deliberate touch of provincial Dublin malice, it "comes to bury Caesar, not to praise him."

The arrival of Mr. Hone's biography of Yeats reopens a nice question of taste and discrimination in presenting the life of a highly gifted writer. Surely we do not ask for an idolatrous portrait of the sitter, but the man who paints the portrait should be aware that Yeats's accomplishments extended far beyond the confines of a public life in Dublin—and it is an almost exclusively Dublin Yeats of the Abbey Theatre that Mr. Hone presents. Now, the Yeats of the Abbey Theatre is not an unfamiliar figure to the world: he has appeared in the pages in Sir William Rothenstein's *Men and Memories*, in George Moore's brilliant *Hail and Farewell*, in Mr. Frank O'Connor's lively sketch of "A.E." and Yeats which was published some time ago in *The Yale Review*—and to these we may add those glimpses of the public Yeats that Yeats himself wished to display in his *Autobiographies*. The trouble with Mr. Hone's biography is that one learns little that is new and nothing that is pertinent to Yeats's remarkable career in writing poetry. It may be diverting to read once more of Yeats's success in promoting the interests of the Abbey Theatre, of his histrionic abilities on the lecture platforms, of his long attachment to Maud Gonne and Augusta, Lady Gregory, of his receiving the Nobel Prize, of his late and fortunate marriage, and finally (which is new and according to Sir Ian Hamilton) his extraordinary resemblance to Adolf Hitler! Mr. Hone's biography lacks balance and perspective; he seems totally unaware of the true nature of Yeats's importance in London and the United States; he is hazy concerning Yeats's relationship to his American publishers and in error when he attempts to explain a change of diction which took place in Yeats's poetry in 1903.

One does not ask a biographer to be a literary critic, but one does require orderliness in the presentation of biographical facts and an understanding of his subject's major activity. Obviously enough, Yeats's activity was the writing of

poetry and one's interest naturally centers in the work that he produced between 1914 and 1939, which is a phenomenon of poetry written in late middle and old age and is equalled only by the mature productions of Chaucer, Walter Savage Landor and Thomas Hardy. Mr. Hone's book is too scattered in its organization and too capricious in its selection of biographical detail to answer questions of primary and abiding interest to readers of Yeats's poetry. Those periods in Yeats's life which are left obscure in his own and none-too-literal *Autobiographies*—and one of these is the period preceeding the writing of *Responsibilities* (1914) and the poems included in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919)—remain painfully confused and elliptical in Mr. Hone's account of his activities. Mr. Hone seems content to view Yeats in the mercurial, greenish light cast from Dublin's mirror and if one read his book without proper sophistication one would be surprised to learn that Yeats's gifts mounted to those of genius in his latter years.

I have no doubt at all that in writing Yeats's life Mr. Hone faced a peculiarly difficult task. Anyone who has read Yeats's *Autobiographies* and George Moore's *Hail and Farewell* becomes aware of Yeats's lack of candor in dealing with his public and his readers. He delighted in mystifying his enemies and less gifted imitators; he became an expert in the art of playing literary politics, an art in which he was far more worldly than George Moore. Granted his interest in promoting an Irish Renaissance and his disinterestedness at certain intervals in doing so, his gifts and perceptions transformed an Irish island view into a universal one; not unlike Picasso and the mature Thomas Stearns Eliot, he walked through and mastered every literary movement worth his notice without losing his identity: he learned more from his associations with Ezra Pound than Pound was able to learn from him, he accepted the devices and technics of succeeding generations of British poets, including those of W. H. Auden and Stephen Spender and improved upon them; he was, if one may say so, "a terrible old man," and in the eyes of superstitious or orthodox Dubliners "a dabbler in Black Magic," but his responsibility to his own gifts, his particular genius of time and place never wavered in its strength or its expression. His renewals of poetic energy always came as a surprise to those who read his poetry and the key to that renewal lay in his belief in the power of changing masks and that there was "more enterprise in walking naked."

Critics as well as biographers have been bewildered from time to time by the mutations of Yeats's poetry, and at the moment he wrote his verses in memory of Major Robert Gregory and *The Tower* there were few to appreciate the fact that Yeats had outgrown the position he occupied as the author of *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* and a number of scarcely producible and symbolically blurred and wavering poetic dramas. It was not until the late nineteen hundred and twenties had arrived that the importance of Yeats's development from *Responsibilities* to the poems written for the pages of *The Tower* had begun to be realized. (And here it should be said in parentheses that the same lag in time of critical appreciation is likely to attend the recent publication of Edith Sitwell's excellent book of poems, *Street Songs*; Miss Sitwell's recent poetry, like that of Yeats, has undergone the mutations of a mature and unexpected growth in intensity and lyric temper, and one may predict with reasonable assurance that her *Street Songs* will be remembered when many lesser poems of the present war will be forgotten.) During the years in which Yeats wrote the best of the work republished or revised for the 1933 edition of his *Collected Poems* Dublin's attitude toward

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the most distinguished poet it had known since the eighteenth century remained dubiously respectful and vaguely hostile. (And we need not hesitate to say that its lyric quality is of greater art and its imaginative power stirs deeper wells of human feeling than the verse of Jonathan Swift and Oliver Goldsmith.)

Perhaps the most valuable contribution that Mr. Hone's book makes to the consciousness of an intelligent reader is its general air of surprise that the son of John Butler Yeats, the accomplished letter writer and portrait painter, should have been among other things—including a Senator of the Irish Free State under Cosgrave—a poet of international reputation and esteem. In this respect Mr. Hone seems to reflect with singular accuracy a point of view held by Dubliners who had never read a line of Yeats's poetry since the day *The Pot of Broth* was presented at the Abbey Theatre.

From the opinions of the past which Mr. Hone's book seems to represent—and these despite his quotation of Mr. T. S. Eliot's laudatory remarks concerning Yeats's gifts in a final paragraph—Yeats's poetry and its reputation needs no defense. The book itself cannot be regarded as a definitive "life"; other books on Yeats and his work will follow, and will, perhaps, amend whatever misconceptions of Yeats's poetry may be gendered by the present biography. Meanwhile, the generation of the Irish Renaissance in Irish literature lies far behind us, and of those writers who carried its strength, its vitality, its right to claim recognition beyond the soil of "John Bull's Other Island," only Douglas Hyde remains—or shall we elect belatedly as a second and certainly honorary member, —George Bernard Shaw?

HORACE GREGORY

The Human Comedy: WILLIAM SAROYAN. Harcourt, Brace.

Let us not discredit the importance of this book. It is no less urgent and full of meaning than recurrent fever in the afternoon. As literature, *The Human Comedy* is inconsiderable. As the pawn ticket on a birthright, it is discouraging. But as an eruption of contagiously sick thinking, it deserves immediate and careful attention.

Its ill is a damning philosophy of dynamic inertia. Saroyan's whole message rings alarmingly like that ill-fated cheer given out by the late Neville Chamberlain when he brought home a collection of autographs gleaned at Munich.

Over four long and terrible years have gone by since the former Prime Minister, a gentleman of good intention, advised the "good people" of Britain to go back to their beds. But apparently the stupid and blind inspiration for his hollow promise of "peace in our time" continues to thrive.

In America, its loudest apostle is William Saroyan. Beating the drum, he calls upon the "good people" of America to go back to their beds, to hope and have faith in the ultimate good of the human race. That simple theme is unsullied by any advocation of intelligent action to insure a decent and workable peace.

Unfortunately, this most recent and prolonged battle cry of compromise will be touted into the hands of thousands of people, a goodly percentage of whom will doubtless believe in it as a final pronouncement of the modern artist. Certainly they will find it easy to take and mildly tonic, like patent medicine.

The people about whom Saroyan purports to write and those people who will read, enjoy and trust his book make up that body of our citizenry which could, by concentrated and understanding action, forge reality from the great American dream. That concentrated and understanding action will not, however, be

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forthcoming if this vague healer and his ilk succeed in clouding the air with their doctrine.

If, between this time and the war's end, such laissez-faire thinking permeates the majority mind, we shall have indifference when we can least afford it. If the "good people" of America take this advice to heart, pull the covers up around their ears and turn their backs on that disagreeable task of thinking and acting together, we shall have another armistice without a victory.

The dead, according to Saroyan, are kept alive in the minds of those who loved them. If that is the case, which it well might be, they are going to find no rest unless we carry their fighting on to a conclusion. That conclusion is being pushed farther away by every *Human Comedy* written and published.

DAVID NEWTON

About The Contributors

☆ R. P. BLACKMUR is the author of two books of criticism and two volumes of poetry. ☆ FREDRICK BRANTLEY has a short story in the current issue of *American Prefaces*. He goes into the army shortly. ☆ KENNETH BURKE has appeared in *The Chimera* before. He lives at Andover, New Jersey. ☆ HELEN EUSTIS has appeared in *Accent* and *New Directions*. ☆ HORACE GREGORY appears in *The Chimera* for the first time. ☆ RUTH HERSCHBERGER has just completed a radio drama based on the life of Poe. ☆ ROBERT LOWELL lives at Monteagle, Tennessee. A book of his poetry will be published this Autumn. ☆ ALLEN TATE is presently working on a new novel. ☆ MARK VAN DOREN lives in New York. He is author of *Our Lady Peace*, a book of verse. ☆ BYRON VAZAKAS has contributed poetry to a number of current literary periodicals. His home is at Reading, Pennsylvania. ☆ PHILIP WHEELWRIGHT is with Dartmouth's philosophy department.